

## Learning Christ

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“That is not the way you learned Christ! — assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus” (vv. 20–21).

- [Ephesians 4:20-22](#)

Eternal punishment awaits all those who refuse to bow the knee to Jesus, so we understandably think of hell when we consider the wrath of God ([Dan. 12:1–2](#); Rev. 20). Of course, hell is the consummation of the Lord’s judgment on the impenitent; nevertheless, sinners begin to feel the Creator’s wrath before their deaths. Such punishment, ironically, does not consist in God keeping fallen human beings from doing what they want. Instead, it pleases the Lord to give people over to their sin ([Rom. 1:18–32](#)). Unless God sovereignly intervenes to rescue a sinner, that sinner pursues his wicked ends with abandon.

Sinners who have been given over to their desires are in the worst place of all in this world, for sin debases the mind (v. 28), making it easy to deny the conscience and continue in willful ignorance of God’s law. Ignorance does not excuse sin, for humanity chose blindness in Adam, and all his descendants continue to choose it each time they deny Jesus (5:12–21). Moreover, ignorance gives way to callousness toward the things of God, an insatiable appetite for impurity ([Eph. 4:17–19](#)).

Christ breaks the power of this lust for evil in His followers; therefore, to walk in the ways of the sinful world is to deny His lordship. Paul makes this very point in today’s passage. If, in fact, we have learned Christ, we understand that we cannot return to life as we lived it in Adam — a life zealous for evil works. On the contrary, we understand that we have discarded Adam in favor of Jesus, who gives us a love for the Creator’s holy will (vv. 20–22). Learning Jesus means that we turn to Him as our living Lord in order that His teaching might shape us. Ultimately, it is nothing less than submission to His righteous rule ([John 14:15](#)). Learning Christ is both a once-for-all choice to serve Him at conversion and a lifelong process of denying the self and taking up His cross in humble repentance, faith, and obedience. Ephesians 4 emphasizes both these aspects: the apostle speaks of the decisive change when we submit to Jesus the first time in faith, and

he explains how this decision works itself out in the Christian life (vv. 17–32). Discipleship, then, is a lifelong process of relying on the grace of God to enable us to put our sin to death by the power of the Holy Spirit ([Rom. 8:13](#)).

Application for God

John Calvin writes, “He whose life differs not from that of unbelievers, has learned nothing of Christ; for the knowledge of Christ cannot be separated from the mortification of the flesh.” Scripture never asserts that sinless perfection is attainable before we are glorified, but it is also clear that those who have no desire for holiness have not been converted. As we hate our sin, repent, and strive to put it to death, we prove that we belong to Jesus.

Passages for Further Study

[Psalm 19:7–14](#)

Proverbs 2

[Romans 8:12–17](#)

[Galatians 3:27](#)

